GUIDE

If you want an explanation, start with the intro. If you just want to know the results of my combo of T and finasteride, go to month 10 labeled “Summary”. There are before and after photos on the last page.

INTRO

Hello my guys, gals, and non binary pals, My name is Riley and I want to share my story on my non binary HRT transition. There’s not a lot of info out there for afab people (assigned female at birth) on middle ground HRT and that’s kinda an issue.

most of the advice people outside of the binary get if we want out transition to reflect that we get is that if we don't want a full transition to 1)not go on hormones, which is not really an answer to the problem or 2) to go on low dose hormones which, while technically answers that question, is not the best answer for every person.

I’d like to share my experience as someone who is on an alternative hormone regimen specifically for the purposes of a non binary transition that is completely 100% endorsed by my doctors.

> I do need to mention that I am not a doctor or professional on this in any way. My advice is not medical advice. All research is coming from a college student with no real authority on anything and that all of the information given is purely based on my personal research and experience. This in no way substitutes your doctor’s knowledge and solely exists to start a much needed conversation about alternate approaches to HRT for non binary folx.

I felt the need to get on hormones for a whole list of reasons just like everyone else but basically that list can be distilled down to one fact. I felt very uncomfortable with my body because of the effects of my natural hormones and I knew that some of the effects of the opposite ones were where I would be happiest long term. The thing is I was held back, because i’m not a man. Of course I could have still done it at a full dose and that approach is 100% valid but it wasn't what I personally wanted. My voice, my fat distribution, my muscles, my skin, and a change in my face shape were all things that sounded amazing to me. But I saw before and after photos of trans men and As amazing as they were and as happy as I was for them, I didnt want that for me.

I first looked into other options a few years ago and basically only found one option. Microdosing.

Microdosing is essentially some combination of doing a low dose or a less frequent dose or both of T in order to get desired effects. The dosage and frequency is different for everyone and this approach really helps a lot of people. I kept getting hung up on one thing though, Testosterone

doesn't care what dosage you do or how frequently you do it, it’s still a wildcard of binary male changes and from what I was reading all of the same changes would happen, just slower.

Even though I desperately wanted some of the changes T had the potential to make me feel very dysphoric in other ways. As much as I love some good facial hair, I didn't want it on myself. I wasn’t too fond of the idea of other secondary hair growth on my chest or back either. Obviously I could manage those things with a quick shave or other more permanent cosmetic procedures, but It still wasn't Ideal. The real thing that made me stop looking for about two years was bottom growth. It’s not something that’s super commonly talked about, but it does happen. I was personally very content with what I have down there and so is my husband. In fact, It’s one of the few places I have almost no physical dysphoria.For me, that wasn't worth the trade off so I just left it alone.

But then in early 2019 I started binding my chest every day, my name started to get more uncomfortable for me to the point that I would cringe internally every time I hear or read it, my voice didn't sound like mine, and I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable and un-at-home in my body. So, while I started looking into stuff about top surgery and about a name change, I also took another look at hormones.

This time I was back with better research skills and I stumbled across a few mentions of DHT blockers mostly in the forms of people asking for the same thing I wanted with no actual answers given. I was a bit confused becasue my first reserch showed that this was a drug to help cis men with male pattern baldness. Upon further research I found an article that cautioned trans men that if they took this to prevent balding they may not grow facial hair, secondary body hair, or have as much bottom growth. This was presented as a bad thing in the article but something clicked into place for me. I saw a path forward.

So let's loop back around to the simplified science of this. (remember that i’m not a doctor) When the human body is given testosterone, it converts a certain portion of it to DHT. These combined chemicals give the body what it needs to undergo male puberty.

T does the heavy lifting on the deepening of the voice, masculine facial structure, male pattern fat distribution, thickening of the skin, acne, some of the increased libido, increased muscle mass and a few other health related side effects that come along with T.

DHT takes care of bottom growth, secondary hair growth, can trigger male pattern baldness, the rest of the increased libido which is most obvious in cis men, and possibly plays some role in the thickening of the vocal cords although there isnt much evidence of this in the literature.

I looked for peer reviewed sources for all of this stuff because I wanted to make sure it was right and I literally ended up with a 3 page research write-up for my doctor with full citations which I printed and brought to my appointment. I also made sure to directly state that I know that that

the effects i was looking for were not guaranteed and that if I had any complications with the finasteride I was still 100% ok with discontinuing it's use.

First I made an appointment with planned Parenthood but had a bad experience with that particular NP and ended up leaving without a prescription. That's a story for another time. But their gender rep set me up with an amazing doctor one city over who was very responsive to research and willing to work with people.

My second doctor was 100% on board after looking at what I had written out and called on August 30th to let me know that she was sending my prescription to the pharmacy, which was quickly followed by a call from my pharmacy to let me know it was ready for pickup.

That was 4 months ago and I couldn't be happier with my results. I started on one pump of 1% androgel and have since slowly moved up to 4 pumps which is the typical starting dose for transgender men. I have been on the DHT blocker finasteride for the duration of that time and have seen pretty much what I expected from my research

In my first month I noticed I had more energy and my vocal range dropped a tiny bit. My gym time also got dramatically more productive and i was sore for less time.

After a month I decided I was feeling good and that I wanted to up my dose to the higher reccomended dose for genderqueer patients which would be 2 pumps for me. Again, I was super happy with what I saw. my energy and gym abilities increase again and my face started to change. My acne also picked up a bit and I'm still figuring out how to manage it but it’s absolutely worth it. I also noticed my vocal range change again.The little hairs i had on my stache pre T did start to grow-in faster and I had to shave them about once a week

Within a month I knew what I wanted more, and quicker changes. The DHT blocker was doing it’s job and I didn't have any of the nasty side effects I had read about. It was a successful combination that was getting me what I expected and wanted. I didn't have any new body hair, just thicker and faster growing hair that was already there. And I although i had experienced some odd sensations down there there was no noticeable bottom growth which anecdotally is one of the first things people usually notice.

So my logic is that if the low dose T was pushing me into the male range and the DHT blocker was pushing it back into the female range I’d be pretty safe upping my dose in order to get to the middle ground that I was after. I was seeing more of myself in the mirror every day and i wanted to meet my new body sooner rather than later.

So after about 3 months I upped my dose to 4 pumps which is the typical starting ftm dose and have been incredibly happy. Basically the changes I saw before were magnified and sped up along with a higher libido that was a bit crazy for a few weeks but has since gone down to a less annoying level and my strength has increased drastically. My voice had dropped even more in

waves but was still in a female -androgenous range and I finally starting to see some distinct changes in my face and body shape. Still no noticeable bottom growth after a month on this dosage and I'm still very happy about that.

At 2 months on this dosage. 5 months overall I was in the hospital a lot with my mother so I for better or worse had to confront being gendered a lot by strangers. And the good news is that I started passing! Usually my voice was the dead giveaway at this point because at first glance people seemed to either be confused or assume female. Then most people would, after spending some time with me, revert to she and female terms. But progress is progress on this stuff. While at the hospital the one really distressing thing this month has been that my monthly cycle is still very irregular but that could easily be from the IUD because it is getting lighter overall. I also noticed a lot more weight redistribution this month. My chest seemed to have started to deflate a bit and even though I was the same weight as when I started all of this there's a distinct slimming in my hips and thighs in photos. My only assumption is that I'm building up my baseline muscle and losing fat and those two things are kinda canceling out on the scale. Still no observable bottom growth. I have also had an interesting observation about my body hair growth. Not bad, Just interesting. Every morning I apply my androgel to my stomach and then wipe the residual specifically on my left shoulder. I have noticed more body hair specifically on my stomach and maybe 10 longer darker hairs on that left shoulder that I definitely didn't have before I started T and that are not present on the right side that stays androgel free. Most of it just seems to have been existing hair growing in darker and thicker but the long, thin, dark ones on my shoulder stand out to me more for some reason, maybe the asymmetry of it. There are a few more on my right shoulder but it's not as much.

6-7 month check in. My voice is still cracking a bit, but my monthly cycle has stopped! I get a tiny bit of spotting but it's not even enough to be very noticable. Body hair has been the biggest change for me recently. The places where I was pressured to shave or wax because I had prior hair have been growing thicker and darker. So still no real new hair but my upper lip always had to be shaved and is now growing longer and darker. I'm testing the limits of this during quarantine and it seems like it may not be thick enough to even pass as a mustache. My belly hair has also grown in more. In month 5, it was just general darker hair all over and now it's more of a "happy trail" but I always had pretty thick peach fuzz in that pattern so again, not really new, just different. Still no noticeable bottom growth at all but since increasing to a full dose my libido has been consistently higher, probably a combination of the T and increased confidence due to less dysphoria. My voice still changes week to week but my range is definitely going down a noticeable amount and my voice consistently cracks during songs that used to be at the medium - top part of my range. I also have gotten comments from family that my face is more "chiseled" so I believe the "T bloat" is finally going away which is great! My chest, hips, and butt are also all noticeably smaller but I'm still the same weight. I think this is a combo of fat redistribution and muscle gain because even with drastic weight loss in the past I never lost mass like this from those areas.

I'm set to see my doctor and get blood done later this month (right before my top surgery consult ^_^).

I still don't always pass consistently but that's ok. This is a process and I'm on the right track. The dht blocker I'm on definitely has some possible side effects for female and male and everything in between bodies so it's absolutely a decision you should pursue under the supervision of your doctor.

SUMMARY

10 months on hormones! The last few months have been wild. I got top surgery 17 days ago! My effects are just going to be a list this time. My bloodwork came back and my levels were a bit too high so I scaled back down to 3 pumps of 1% androgel daily and that's likely where I'll stay. It was always a possibility that I have PCOS which requires less T so I'm not very surprised.
Facial hair-a bit of a stache and some chin hairs. Nothing too intense. Definitely not a beard by any means. Very similar to the stuff I'd wax or pluck off pre transition.
Body hair- I must have very hairy genetics because I do have belly hair now. I'm expecting chest hair too since my local hormone sources in my chest are gone. I've talked to others on the same set of stuff with no hair growth. I think it's a genetic and pre existing hair thing because I've always been on the hairer side.
Face Shape- pretty significant facial fat redistribution. Very noticeable in photos even without weight loss.
Body Shape- chest had deflated a LOT before surgery and so have my thighs and butt. I have a bit more of a beer gut but do still have some hip fat (see photos at the end). Overall though I'm definitely less 'curvy' and more squared off.
Muscle- my default body has more muscle than it did before and it is much easier to gain it and keep it.
Weight- I had no gain or loss of weight eating and working out how I did before. I do find myself consuming a few extra hundred calories a day at this point and maintaining the same way I used to with less.
Head hair- seemingly unaffected. Still have thick, fast growing hair.
Voice- very noticeable change. I've had to re-record some things because it doesn't sound at all like me anymore. My head voice is still feminine but my chest voice is andro-masc. The issue is staying there when I'm excited or stressed. My singing is pretty wrecked. Not that my voice is bad but I can't connect my different bass, chest, and head ranges smoothly anymore. I definitely regret stopping singing and not doing scales.
Bottom growth- maybe the smallest amount? Like, a few millimeters of growth. Honestly not very noticeable at all. It has become more sensitive and sex has definitely changed sensation as a result but still enjoyable.
Passing- honestly, I don't really know because I just got top surgery and everyone is wearing masks and avoiding each other (for very good reason). But I definitely feel like with new people who hadn't met me I could pass as male if I could keep my voice relaxed.
Periods- every 1-3 months I get a 1-2 days of cramps and very light bleeding.

Side effects- still none. I have anxiety and depression built into me but have felt better than I ever have mentally. I still have a good libido and feel great. Sex requires a bit more lube but it's not bad at all.

Obviously this isn't 100% applicable for everyone but hopefully at least one person out there sees this and realizes they have options beyond the binary. Remember, do your research and be your own advocate as much as you can.

At 11 months on this combo I have decided to go off my finasteride. Not because it didn't work, but because I've realized androgenous is not where I want to end up and it's where I am. I get gendered either way about 50-50 and I get really upset at one of those 50's. My voice is somewhere in the middle so I can definitely use my chest voice and pass as a guy but I see a puppy and it's all over. I have definitely reached my goal of gender confusion but I'm not content yet. I've also come to realize that I actually really want facial hair. It's something I've been jealous of in men for a long time.
There's still the definite possibility that I will change my mind and go back on it, but for now I am seeing how much can change without the DHT blocker at play.
My research shows the drug itself is out of my system in 4-6 hours but it could take several months to replace the stuff the blocker is bonded to.
I will keep this document updated because at this point the bottom growth seems to have been most affected by the blocker and I want to verify that it'll start up again and fully expect it to.

Two weeks off and I already had noticeable bottom growth, got very dysphoric about it, and went back on. Definitely happier on it and have not had any negative side effects testing being off of it or getting back on.

Over a year now! I moved into a new place on my 1 year mark and I'm happy to say that the bottom growth did go back down when I got back on the finasteride but it took a few weeks. Basically everything is the same, body hair where I apply my androgel, voice is still slowly lowering, little to no bottom growth. I've been struggling with my weight but I think that's more of a plague quarantine related thing. I still feel stronger and as long as I don't raise my voice out of habit I generally pass as a guy or at the very least confuse people.

Another update from early 2020. I've decided that bottom growth is something I want and so I went off the finnasterine. I haven't had any bad effects and bottom growth started immediately so I'm very sure that was what was stopping it for me that whole time. I'll update this after about 6 months off to explain if anything has changed.

Before and After of similarish photos from last year and this year on the next page